

Race 1 Selections

THE HORSEPLAYERS JOURNAL by Mike Hamilton

4 ALICORN was bet down to 1-9 in the \$157,500 final of the Battle of the Belles at Grand River but unfortunately she had trouble negotiating the first turn and that early break cost her the win. To her credit she did make a quick recovery and then remained parked the rest of the mile to finish a lapped-on second. I'm banking that a return to the 7/8ths track will help, especially if she can work out a trip along the lines of the one she had when she was a 1:51 winner on 07/19.

1 ALEXA SKYE didn't fare too well in the final of the Whenuwishuponastar but at least she did make one move (she led briefly, yielded to her stablemate) and at 1:52.4 she extended her streak of steadily improving times. She's the third foal of her \$607K winning dam, with the other two being sub-1:51 pacing bothers Macadoodledoo and Mac Attack so there's definitely potential here.

2 LADY LOU might have fared a bit better in the Whenuwishuponastar had she not been somewhat indecisive at the start, first-over on the final turn, and then checked briefly and shoved three-wide when Alexa Sky came out as they neared the top of the stretch.

RECENT ETERNAL CAMNATION STAKES WINNERS

Date	Track	Winner	Driver	Trainer	Time	PP	Margin	Odds	Purse
2018-08-25	Wdbs	QUEBEC BLUE CHIP	Jody Jamieson	David Menary	1:53.2	5	3/4	4.40	83,115
		TALL DRINK HANOVER	Andrew McCarthy	Tony Alagna	1:52.4	4	3	*.15	84,116
2017-08-28	Moh	PERCY BLUE CHIP	Trevor Henry	Dr. Ian Moore	1:51.4	8	1	*.45	192,333
2016-08-20	Moh	BETTORS UP	James MacDonald	Scott McEnery	1:52.1	6	2-3/4	*.50	105,550
		CANDLELIGHT DINNER	Jonathan Drury	Casie Coleman	1:52.2	4	1-1/2	*.10	105,550
2015-08-22	Moh	THATSOVERYVERYNICE	Jody Jamieson	Tony Alagna	1:51.4	3	1	*1.15	110,631
		L A DELIGHT	Randall Waples	Robert McIntosh	1:51.4	5	4-3/4	*.65	112,130
2014-08-16	Moh	SOLAR SISTER	Doug McNair	Gregg McNair	1:54.0	2	nk	12.75	77,745
		JK SHESALADY	Yannick Gingras	Nancy Johansson	1:53.4	7	7	*.45	76,245
		SHAKAI HANOVER	Jody Jamieson	Carl Jamieson	1:53.4	6	ns	3.85	76,245
2013-08-17	Moh	SHES DA BOMB	Doug McNair	Tony O'Sullivan	1:52.0	7	4-3/4	*1.65	108,922
		PRECOCIOUS BEAUTY	Doug McNair	Gregg McNair	1:50.2	6	6-1/2	2.45	108,922

Race 2 Selections

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4 ATLANTA is arguably the one to beat in this first of two Maple Leaf Trot elims. But as she showed last week in the Joie de Vie at Tioga, she isn't indestructible. That was a major disappointment as she was seemingly handed the race when Manchego was KO'd on the first turn. I'm willing to give her a second chance as any horse – especially a mare – can have a bad day and she was so good just three back in the Graduate that the idea of her going undefeated all year didn't seem far-fetched.

6 GUARDIAN ANGEL AS turned in a gutsy performance to finish a close second in the John Cashman on Hambletonian Day so it wouldn't be much of a surprise if he came up with a win now that he has dodged Crystal Fashion and Six Pack. Remember, he squared off with the favoured Six Pack from the first-over position while eventual winner Crystal Fashion watched from the pocket. It wouldn't take much more to win this one, especially if Atlanta lays another egg.

5 DREAM TOGETHER has had a few setbacks so far this year (sickness, interference, broken equipment) and as a result she's still looking for her first win of 2019. I'm not calling for a win in this race but I wouldn't be surprised if she wound up in the top-three, just as she has in three starts since re-qualifying. The 08/11 recovery from an 'ix' in the Joie de Vie was particularly impressive.

2 DANCER HALL might benefit from home track advantage, just as he did last year when second in his MLT elim and fourth in the final. Of course last year he was coming off a 4-1/4 length win in the Earl Rowe and this year he was held to fourth in that same race.

ON THIS DATE...

79 – Italy's Mount Vesuvius erupted, burying the city of Pompeii in volcanic ash and killing at least 15,000

410 – Rome was overrun by Visigoths, seen as the fall of the Western Roman Empire

Race 3 Selections

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7 SIX PACK will have to be on top of his game if he's to beat the mares Manchego and Hannelore Hanover as well as the recent Cashman and Hambletonian Maturity winner Crystal Fashion. We're going to give him the nod in the belief that he'll make front a little easier than when starting from Post 9 at the Meadowlands and Post 8 at Yonkers. In the 08/03 Cashman he was burned early, pressured around the final turn, and it wasn't until about a dozen strides before the wire that he finally gave way. And to be clear, we are talking about a World Champion and the reigning Dan Patch Award winner.

3 MANCHEGO is considered to be the arch enemy of Atlanta and when these two mares take on other mares, as they did in the Steele and Joie de Vie, they pack a lethal one-two punch. However, she hasn't been quite as dominant when facing the boys in races like the Graduate and Hambletonian Maturity. It would be foolish to hold the 08/11 setback against her.

4 CRYSTAL FASHION took a new lifetime record and tied the stakes record in the Cashman (formerly the Nat Ray) when he was allowed to draft along behind the duelling duo of Guardian Angel AS and Six Pack. That was a gift of a trip that Miller will be hard pressed to replicate. I won't rule out another win but neither am I banking on it.

2 HANNELORE HANOVER is tough to overlook as one of two \$3 million winners in this field of seven. She was a lapped-on second to Manchego once she found racing room on 08/03 and those with long memories will recall that she won her Maple Leaf Trot eliminations in 2016 and 2017 and even took the 2017 final by 4-1/2 lengths in 1:51.1.

ON THIS DATE...

1891 – Thomas Edison was granted a US patent for the motion picture camera

1894 – Robert J defeated Joe Patchen in 2:05, 2:06, and 2:06½ to establish a new world record for three heats

Race 4 Selections

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9 YACHT SEELSTER might not have been operating at 100% capacity when he wound up fourth on 08/10 as we had expected the 6-5 favourite to be much better off a second-over trip. The fact that he took last week off tends to reinforce the idea that something was amiss. He'll have to work for whatever he gets from Post 9 but at this level he deserves a second shot.

3 P L JACKSON is dropping down a notch after taking an inside trip and finishing a lacklustre 9th. While it's true that he was shuffled on the turn, he did have room though the stretch and very little to offer. Perhaps the class drop is all he needs.

1 INDIGO ART hasn't been to the winner's circle since 07/07 when he took the Preferred-3 class at Georgian for driver Anthony Haughan. It's Andrew McCarthy who gets the drive for this race, having replaced Mike Saftic at scratch time. Hmm.

6 BETTOR OPS N has a great win percentage this year but since moving up from the NW3600L5 class he has been lacklustre at best. Will Post six make the difference? I doubt that it's enough to make him a winner but it might thrust him into the Superfecta.

ON THIS DATE...

1902 – Carlo Gambino, boss of the Gambino crime family, born in Palermo, Sicily, Italy (d. 1976)

1905 – Chicago Cubs beat Philadelphia Phillies 2-1 in 20 innings

1908 – Hanover, Ontario-born boxer Tommy Burns knocked out Bill Squires in the 13th round for the world heavyweight championship in Sydney, Australia

1932 – Amelia Earhart became the first woman to fly across the US non-stop; the trip from Los Angeles to Newark (New Jersey) took 19 hours

Race 5 Selections

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11 CAPT MIDNIGHT hopes to add to his win in the Dream Maker and give McCarthy / Alagna their second consecutive win in this event. There were three divisions last year, each for \$92K, but with just 11 entered this year, they'll all compete in one race for \$228,100. And while Captain Midnight is relegated the second tier, it could be worse. I'd rather see him start from back here as opposed to Post 9 or 10 even though Post 11 starters are 0-for-22 this year on the pace and 1-for-6 on the trot. His last two wins were off pocket trips and tonight he has the option of following a stablemate who has plenty of giddy-up-go.

1 CAPTAIN NEMO is the aforementioned stablemate of our top pick and also a two time runner-up after doing some if not most of the work in their last two meetings. But make no mistake, both Alagna colts were exceptionally good in a race where there was a gap of four back to the third place finisher.

3 ALLYWAG HANOVER was sent off as the 6-5 chalk in the Dream Maker based on the way he won his 07/29 race (by open lengths, last quarter 26.2). Whether he deserved to be the favourite in that race is debatable – and a moot point by now. If he bounces back to win this one we'll know that the bettors were onto something and that Allywag Hanover simply paid the price for putting Captain Midnight into the two hole.

9 EXAMINER HANOVER picked up a win in his latest, but only after race favourite One For Julius made a break on the lead and suffered broken equipment. I don't see him repeating in present company.

RECENT NASSAGAWEYA STAKES WINNERS

Date	Track	Winner	Driver	Trainer	Time	PP	Margin	Odds	Purse
2018-08-25	Wdbs	CAPTAIN AHAB	Andrew McCarthy	Tony Alagna	1:51.4	2	1-1/4	*.05	92,127
		CAPTAIN CRUNCH	Scott Zeron	Nancy Johansson	1:52.0	7	3-3/4	*.55	92,127
		STAG PARTY	David Miller	Casie Coleman	1:52.2	7	10	*.30	92,127
2017-08-26	Moh	SHADOW MOON	Trevor Henry	Dr. Ian Moore	1:51.4	11	hd	2.95	113,525
	Moh	PEDRO HANOVER	Andrew McCarthy	Andrew Harris	1:52.1	7	2-1/4	*1.50	112,525
2016-08-20	Moh	ROCK THIS WAY	Mario Baillargeon	Benoit Baillargeon	1:51.3	9	2-1/2	69.00	106,250
2015-08-22	Moh	VORACITY	Randall Waples	Tony Alagna	1:51.2	2	3/4	*1.25	78,334
		THE CATAMOUNT KID	Jody Jamieson	Carl Jamieson	1:52.1	5	2	3.20	78,334
		CONTROL THE MOMENT	Randall Waples	Brad Maxwell	1:51.3	5	1	*.40	78,334

Race 6 Selections

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6 FANCOURT looks as good as any in this eclectic group of claimers, US shippers, and class-climbers. He rarely goes more than about eight starts without a win and this seems like a good opportunity now that he has driven the most recent win off the bottom of his last five lines.

1 TYGA HANOVER is one that we had picked to win at this level one week ago tonight and he did his part only to come up a few inches short. It was definitely a step in the right direction for a horse that accepted an inside trip and wound up penniless in much slower time just a week earlier. There's win potential here.

4 ROCKIN IN HEAVEN isn't one that we can back with complete confidence now that he's up to the NW12000L5 level but neither is he a cross-off, especially with an ideal post. He should be in a much better position than he was last time when confined to Post 10.

5 PEDRO HANOVER isn't the most obvious pick in this race but he might offer some value for the money and I can definitely see him working out the trip now that he leaves from Post 5 in a field of nine. Last week he took back and simply had too far to come in a 1:50 mile that was dominated by Tyga Hanover and the pocket-sitting Nickle Bag. Two back he was first-over at three-quarters in 1:22.2 and five back he finished a closing second to Casimir Richie P while racing in the Preferred Handicap. And while it's little more than trivia at this point, this week marks the second anniversary of his 2017 win in the Nassagaweya.

ON THIS DATE...

1959 – Richard 'The Cat' Simard, driver, born in Montreal, Quebec

1960 – The temperature in Vostok, Antarctica dipped to -127°F (-88°C), a world record

1973 – Barons Boy (Ron Feagan) and J R Henry (Ron Waples) won \$14,600 divisions of the Canadian Juvenile Stakes at Greenwood Raceway

9 PHYSICALLY INCLINED is one that we turned to last time out in the belief that the 08/10 blowout would have set him up perfectly for the drop out of the Preferred and into the NW25000L5 class. Rather than treat that 08/10 race as a “failed” front-ender, we considered it to be a necessary evil as he did work a win off the bottom of his last five lines. And while he raced well enough “on the drop” he did come up a head shy of another horse who was dropping out of the Preferred, 42-time winner Nirvana Seelster. Maybe this time!

2 TRACEUR HANOVER would be a fun play if you’re into anniversaries. Like Pedro Hanover who raced in the 6th, Traceur Hanover was a Nassagaweya winner as a two-year-old. We can only guess what advice he’ll have for the impressionable Nassagaweya starters that he’ll meet in the paddock tonight, but as a 33-time winner from 132 starts, and likely to go over \$1 million at some point, he is well qualified to dispense advice.

6 STAG PARTY is the lone three-year-old in this field of high end conditioned horses and the only one of the bunch who has yet to win in 2019. That doesn’t sound like one that we would ordinarily pick, does it? Clearly there is nothing “ordinary” about Stag Party. One year ago this week he won his Nassagaweya split by a whopping 10 lengths and a month later he returned to win the \$890K Metro. While somewhat disappointing in recent starts with OSS company, he simply cannot be ruled out in an overnight.

5 ELLIS PARK didn’t race last Saturday but as recently as 08/10 he was a respectable second to Traceur Hanover. Had they reversed roles – with Traceur being first-over and Ellis Park shown clear track along the cones – it’s likely that the outcome would also have been reversed. He’s a contender but not exactly a standout at the age of 10.

Race 8 Selections

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4 JIMMY FREIGHT was bet down to 4-5 in last week's Prix d'Été but unfortunately he was not "4-5 the best" from Post 6. He might have been had he and race winner This Is The Plan swapped posts, but with the Burke horse making front and parking Jimmy through three-quarters in a sizzling 1:21.2 on a half-mile track it's a wonder that he held on for third. He's unlikely to go another 11 starts before notching his second win of the year and with a little different trip he might get it at the expense of Courtly Choice, especially if that one wanders at the end of the mile.

5 COURTLY CHOICE seized the opportunity that was presented last week when Jimmy Freight and Casimir Richie P headed to Trois-Rivières for the highlight of the Quebec season, the \$200,000 Prix d'Été. Easy Lover Hanover is the one who got all the attention in that race, probably because he was coming off a win at the same level whereas Courtly Choice and Western Fame were new onto the scene. When the smoke cleared, the new kids were first and second and ELH was a retreating fifth after a first-over trip.

7 WESTERN FAME can hold his head high even though he was second best to Courtly Choice in his 08/17 return to Mohawk. While he has given up the lead in several big races, including the Ben Franklin on 06/29, he does fit nicely in the local Preferred and he might be even better with an extra week to settle into his new surroundings.

9 CASIMIR RICHIE P did as well as could be expected in the Prix d'Été considering that he was stuck in Post 8 on a half-mile track where the early leader has a clear advantage. In that race the early leader was the only leader – the Ron Burke-trained This Is The Plan who rolled to a new track record.

8 EASY LOVER HANOVER has been the favourite in the Preferred in four of his last five and he even managed to win one of those times. He deserves our respect but I just don't see him bouncing back to win from Post 8 when horses like Courtly Choice, Jimmy Freight are starting to his inside.

ON THIS DATE...

1980 – Niatross made the first of his three starts in Canada when he won the Prix d'Été at Blue Bonnets by 6-1/4 lengths in 1:53.4. At the time the Prix d'Été was restricted to three-year-olds.

Race 9 Selections

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2 REFLECT WITH ME has done everything that has been asked of her since landing in Canada in late July and tonight she hopes to follow in the footsteps of her three-year-old stablemate Tall Drink Hanover and add a win in the Eternal Camnation to her list of accomplishments. Tall Drink came into the 2018 Whenuwishuponastar off a third place finishing the Kindergarten and she went on to win the Shes A Great Lady for Alagna and McCarthy. Reflect With Me, also a Captaintreacherous filly, is well equipped to do just that if you place any faith in what McCarthy had to say following the latest win. He told WEG's Chad Rozema that Reflect With Me "has all the tools" and "I think she'll only get better."

3 KARMA SEELSTER has never been worse than third and at this point she's on a three race with streak having just won the Battle of the Belles elim and final and a Gold event over the half-miler at Grand River. She faced Ontario-sired fillies in each of those three and here she is up against some US-breds in a race that is bound to be a little tougher.

5 KAT finished second to Reflect With Me in each of her Whenuwishuponastar appearances and there is a chance that she'll reprise that role now that they have very similar post positions in another field of seven. Her times are headed in the right direction and she's reunited with Henry.

1 SOMEBEACHSOMETIME got 9-5 support in the final of the Whenuwishuponastar based on the way she finished off her mile in the series' second leg. She's clearly a very nice filly but until she gets off the wings a bit better she'll be playing catch-up and that's going to be a tough way to win this one.

ON THIS DATE...

1968 – Blaze Pick (Ron Waples / Keith Waples) paced the first 2:00 mile in Ontario when he won at Mohawk in 2:00 flat, easily beating Dean Herbert's 2:01.4 track record. Blaze Pick cut fractions of 28.3, 1:00.1, 1:30 to beat R Yankee Wann, Dean Herbert, Golfer Mir, Sharp N Smart and H A Meadowlands. Fast forward 51 years and Keith Waples, trainer of Blaze Pick, is still active in the game and represented in this race by Karma Seelster.

1 SPORTSLINE looks like the one to beat now that he gets a second shot at Grassroots starters in this \$17K overnight race. He was our top choice when he contested an actual Grassroots race last week but unfortunately he had to work a bit too hard to make front in a 26.2 quarter and that caught up to him in deep stretch when the one who had pressed the pole, Dreamfair Moxy, emerged from a pocket trip. Prior to that Sportsline had one start with Gold ties and several overnights with salty three, four and five-year-olds. He did win his last Grassroots race on 06/27 in a career best 1:50.3 despite finishing with a broken knee boot.

7 PRICELESS BEACH should be well positioned to take advantage of the situation should Sportsline tire and drift off the rail as they come down the stretch. This guy did win at the NW2 level the last time he was treated to a two-hole trip and last week he showed enough gate speed that I can see him landing near the lead if not on the lead and then covered up in the second quarter.

4 HP NAPOLEON is another strong candidate in a race for Grassroots starters who are non-winners of \$20K in their last five or \$40K lifetime as he just squeaks in with \$39,847. He's also a two time Grassroots winner and now partnered with Louis Philippe Roy for the first time.

2 MACHDAVID looks better in present company than he did when he faced Gold colts on 08/02. Last week he left enough to garner a three-hole trip and he kept pace with an even-money winner even if he did end up sharing second and third money when finished in a dead-heat.

ON THIS DATE...

1972 – Gordie Howe and Jean Belliveau were inducted into the Hockey Hall of Fame

1984 – Dignatarian (Earl Cruise) won the \$66,598 Champlain Stakes (2CP) at Greenwood in 1:58.2

1989 – Pete Rose, the manager of the Cincinnati Reds, was banned for life from baseball for gambling

1991 – Silky Stallone (Jack Moiseyev / Brett Pelling) won the \$523,190 Cane Pace at Yonkers Raceway in 1:53.3

7 SPORTS TEEN is a much better prospect than his 1-for-15 record and history of going off at double digit odds might suggest. He did win a similar race for Grassroots starters on 08/12 and last week he finished widest and liveliest of all in a race that Dreamfair Moxy won from the pocket. That race winner now has the week off and runner-up The Regulator has been relegated to Post 10.

2 PHILS SUN doesn't look like the type that will run away and hide on Grassroots starters but I certainly wouldn't be shocked if he found a way to win. Did James MacDonald give him a vote of confidence by dropping Moonshine Kisses at scratch time or did trainer Shawn Steacy simply assign drivers?

1 MOONSHINE KISSES is bound to find a shorter way around the track than was the case last week when he left from Post 8 and went 32' further than the winner according to the Trackus electronic charting system. He's in good hands with McNair even if MacDonald did give him the could shoulder.

10 THE REGULATOR launched his three-year-old season with a couple of snap wins and he even won his first appearance in a Grassroots race back on 06/27. That 1:49.4 clocking still stands as the country's fastest by a three-year-old gelding in 2019. We had lost faith in him by the time he got to start #18 but to his credit he did sneak up the cones to finish second behind a tripped-out favourite.

MIKE'S SPOT PLAY: 7 SPORTS TEEN

ON THIS DATE...

1996 – Ball And Chain (John Campbell / Joe Stutzman) won the \$267,750 final of the Canadian Pacing Derby in 1:50.2

2000 – Ontario's tenth racetrack slots operation opened at Clinton Raceway

2004 – Two-year-old trotting colt Ken Warkentin won his Canadian debut for trainer-driver Jimmy Takter and co-owner Tie Domi of the Toronto Maple Leafs who was in the winner's circle